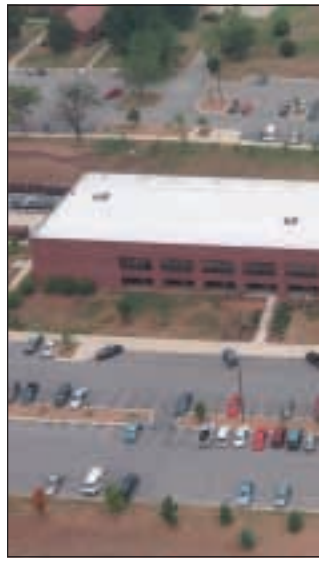
Soldiers Online

The Army's Maneuver Support Center



Story by
SSG John Valceanu

Though well-known as a long-serving basic training post, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., has grown into a technologically advanced training center for the Army's military police, chemical and engineer soldiers.

Fort Leonard Wood's Maneuver Support Center Plaza is surrounded by Hoge Hall *(left)*, Lincoln Hall *(middle)* and Clark Library.

FORT Leonard Wood has come a long way. The installation, located on approximately 63,000 acres in south-central Missouri, spent decades serving primarily as a basic training installation. Though enlisted engineers had been trained on the post since its creation on the eve of World War II, it did not become the official home of the Army's engineers until the late 1980s.

A decade later, the installation also became the official home to the Army's chemical and military police corps when they moved from Fort McClellan, Ala. At the dawn of the 21st century, Fort Leonard Wood is the Army's Maneuver Support Center. The installation boasts some of the most modern and technologically advanced training facilities in the world.

"These are the finest facilities I've seen in the Army, and we're very proud of them," said CSM Jesus Gomez, commandant of the installation's NCO academy. "Whether

The E.F. Bullene Chemical Defense Training Facility

Thurman Hall

The Community Service Center

The Reception Battalion Headquarters

soldiers are here for a professional-development course or other training, they will be able to learn under the best conditions possible."

The NCO Academy

The Fort Leonard Wood NCO Academy is one of the largest in the Army, training some 3,200 students a year. The facilities can accommodate almost 900 students at a time, but are rarely filled to capacity, Gomez said.

The academy operates a drill sergeant school and offers the Professional Leadership Development Course for soldiers from all military occupational specialties. It also offers professional NCO development courses for those soldiers with engineer, chemical or military police MOSs.

There is no stripping and buffing of floors for students in the academy. The installation's billeting office provides housekeeping maintenance services.

"Our philosophy is to do whatever we can to allow students to focus on their studies," Gomez said. "It's a very different environment than when I went through these courses, but we believe it is more conducive to training." Students in the academy have access to computers with Internet connectivity, so they can conduct research, and modern recreation rooms are maintained to keep up their morale.

Gomez comes from an engineering background, but he works closely with his two assistant commandants, who represent the chemical and military police branches. The commandant said that this helps ensure fairness in decision-making.

"We've had some challenges in consolidating the three branches into one schoolhouse," Gomez said. "But we've got a real commitment on the part of the leadership to work together, and I've been surprised at how smooth the integration has been."

Integration is a key component of "synergy," a guiding principle for leadership at Fort Leonard Wood. Synergy is defined by business guru Stephen Covey as "the fruit of thinking

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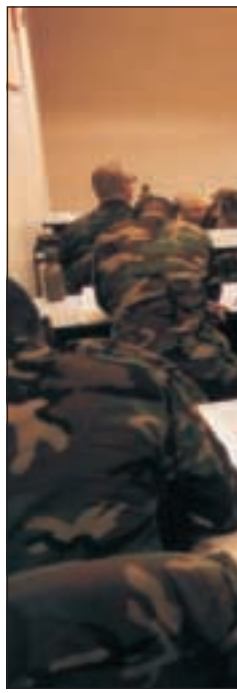
Students attending the Professional Leadership Development Course wait outside their billets. Fort Leonard Wood's NCO Academy is one of the largest in the Army, training approximately 3,200 students each year.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Fort Leonard Wood and the U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center play a key role in keeping the Army's combat support troops trained and ready.



win-win and seeking first to understand. It's the creation of third alternatives that are genuinely better than solutions individuals could ever come up with on their own."

Synergy at Leonard Wood comes about as a result of the interaction among soldiers, civilians, contractors and members of other services, said Edward Thomas, chief of the simulations division.

Computer Simulations

The computer simulations offered by Fort Leonard Wood's training center are on the cutting edge of technology, boasting two types of linked computer systems that allow soldiers to plan and execute military operations in a virtually endless number of realistic scenarios.

Instructors use the JANUS computer system to train soldiers in battle planning at the company level and below. Soldiers using the system must conduct terrain analyses and make tactical decisions, said CPT Mark Strehle, a small-group instructor at the U.S. Army Engineer School.

Another computer system, BBS, is tailored more for training at the battalion and brigade levels. This system includes 12 simulated tactical operations centers, each housed in individual rooms and tied together by a network. The computers are also connected with after-action review rooms, where students can study the lessons learned from the "battles" they fought.

According to Thomas, all the computer-based simulations training is designed to integrate with what students learn in the classroom.

"We complement and reinforce what small-group leaders teach," Thomas said. "We try to facilitate learning and allow students and instructors to make mistakes here, so they won't make them the battlefield."

What makes the training particularly effective is that students face a "live threat," not just a computer.

"As the opposing force, we make sure that learning points are reinforced. Our OPFOR is composed of a select group of senior-level DA civilians and contractors," Thomas said. "We're not here to defeat the students, but we want to make sure they learn."

Thomas said the bulk of the contractors are retired senior NCOs, whose focus is to help the students.

"We don't care what rank they are, whether specialists or majors," Thomas said. "We don't want them to fail."

In the future, it may be possible to connect to schools on other installations, such as the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga. This would allow students from various branches and at different installations to take part in the same exercise, Thomas said.

Homeland Security

Though Fort Leonard Wood has become one of the Army's most important training installations, training is not its only focus. The post also plays a critical role in the development of the Army's "homeland security" program.

Recognizing the increased danger of terrorism on U.S. soil, Fort Leonard Wood's Maneuver Support Battle Lab is helping to define the military's role in responding to large-scale terrorism within the United States.

Vernon Lowry, technical director of the battle lab, said that Fort Leonard Wood is a natural place to help develop the homeland-security concept because military police, engineer and chemical assets all play important roles in homeland defense.

"We're still trying to develop the concept of what, exactly, homeland security is," Lowry said. "We've been

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Modern classrooms with the latest in audiovisual teaching aids allow thousands of combined arms initial-entry students to benefit from top training as they earn their MOSs.

SSG John Valceanu

Officers benefit from computer-simulated exercises in Fort Leonard Wood's General Instruction Facility. Soldiers from team leaders to brigade commanders may participate in the exercises.

part of an effort among the branches of the military to work together and pool our efforts with intelligence agencies, as well as federal and local law-enforcement organizations."

Lowry said the issues surrounding homeland security are very complex because of the large number of agencies involved, and because there are laws restricting military operations within the nation's borders.

"There are lots of parts, lots of pieces, and it can be frustrating because everyone has a different view of what homeland security is supposed to be," Lowry said. "We do know that our military assets are to be used to support the first responder to the scene, which is normally the local law-enforcement agency. Military forces do not take control at a scene unless the president declares a state of national emergency."

There are currently 10 joint civil support teams — with 17 more forming — designed to help with homeland security, spread throughout the United States. All teams come to Fort Leonard Wood to train on critical skills, and one team, the 7th Weapons of Mass Destruction CST, is based at Fort Leonard Wood.

The team's mission is to respond to the request of local authorities during an emergency or disaster and assess suspected nuclear, biological, chemical or radiological threats. In addition, the team would advise civilian respondents on appropriate action and facilitate requests for additional state or federal assets, said team commander LTC William Johnson.

"We're on call seven days a week, 365 days a year. We're all tied to 'electronic tethers' — pagers and cell phones. We're always ready to roll," Johnson said. "Our strength lies in our expertise and willingness to go into unknown environments, and in our specialized equipment."

Each team is built around a core of 22 service members belonging to the Army and Air National Guard. Each team member is trained and cross-trained in NBC, medical, logistics, supply and communications. Usually, team members receive both military and civilian training and certifications, allowing them to more easily interact with civilian agencies.

"A lot of what I need to know was picked up through civilian classes," said SSG Sean Hagerty, an NBC specialist on the team. "The military NBC training is great for combat and military operations, but it is not designed for civilian-support operations."

The teams regularly interact with local agencies such as fire and police departments, and with federal agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"By getting to know each other, we have their respect when we walk onto a scene, and they will be confident that we know what we're doing," Johnson said. "By the same token, our personnel will already know with whom to interact and how to do it."

The civil-support teams and evolving homeland-security program are important real-world initiatives designed to save civilian lives and prevent suffering during acts of domestic terrorism or mass destruction. At the same time, the top-quality training received by engineer, NBC and military police soldiers can prevent casualties and ensure victory on the battlefield and in operations other than war.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Fort Leonard Wood and the U.S. Army Maneuver Support Center together play a key role in keeping the Army's combat support troops trained and ready. □

Safety personnel continuously monitor the chemical training facility with sensors and video cameras.

Chemical School

Story and Photos by SSG John Valceanu

Fort Leonard Wood's E.F. Bullene Chemical Defense Training Facility, completed in February 1999, is the only DOD facility in which service members train with toxic chemical agents.

During initial-entry training, students learn how to employ the sophisticated Bio Detection Integrated System used to detect chemical and biological agents.

INSTRUCTORS and cadre members of the U.S. Army Chemical School were comfortable in their long-time home at Fort McClellan. But when they moved to Fort Leonard Wood, they were surprised and impressed by the improvements in training facilities.

"Our chemical training bays here are 50 percent larger, and they have the most modern monitoring equipment available. Literally every action inside a bay is monitored by the safety control office," said COL Allan Hardy, commander of the 3rd Chemical Brigade, which is responsible for training all of the Army's chemical-operations specialists.

"The training advantages are certainly better here at Fort Leonard Wood. We can change the props inside the bays, which allows us to train on different scenarios," said SFC Lamar Garrett, operations NCO for the Chemical Defense Training Facility. "Also, the lighting is a lot better, and

(Above) **This area of the Bullene Training Facility allows students to practice the decontamination of individuals and large pieces of equipment, including helicopters and tracked vehicles.**

(Left) **Students in the chemical specialist course use the buddy system to drink water. Soldiers in the course often spend hours in their protective gear.**

(Right) **Instructor SSG Joe Long coaches an M-240 gunner atop a Fox wheeled chemical reconnaissance vehicle.**

we can observe the students better. This is just a much more advanced facility all around. Our mission has stayed the same, but now we accomplish it more efficiently."

Fort Leonard Wood's E.F. Bullene Chemical Defense Training Facility was completed in February 1999 at a cost of approximately $28 million. It's the only facility within the Department of Defense in which service members train with toxic chemical agents. Training in the CDTF creates confidence in chemical soldiers by demonstrating the reliability of their chemical-defense equipment.

The Chemical Applied Training Facility, known as Nord Hall, is another key part of the Chemical School. It's where initial-entry chemical soldiers receive a portion of their technical training. The CATF also offers specialized training on chemical detection and decontamination equipment.

"This facility allows us to teach several portions of the chemical specialist course in one place," said SFC Eloi Gonzales, senior chemical-biological decontamination instructor. "That makes it a lot easier on students. Here at Leonard Wood, they can march from one class to another. Back at McClellan, we had to bus them."

The Chemical School's headquarters is located in Thurman Hall, a state-of-the-art training facility equipped with the most sophisticated computer and audiovisual equipment available. Thurman Hall is the primary site for chemical officer training, and for specialized training on the Biological Integrated Detection System and the Fox chemical reconnaissance vehicle.

"The facilities and computer support here are a great deal better than what we had at McClellan," said MAJ Sven Erichsen, course manager and chief small-group leader in the Chemical Captain's Career Course. "Right now, we're working on harnessing the skills and abilities of cadre to work together on best using these great facilities to our advantage."

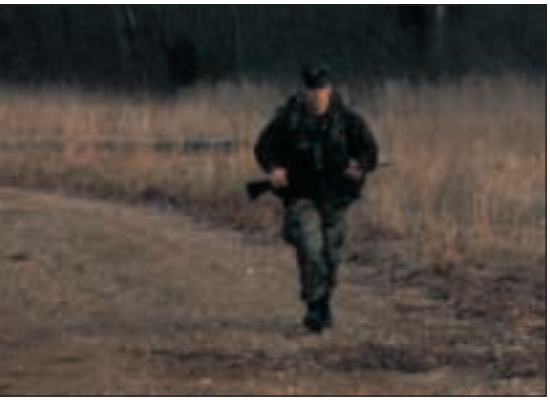
Fort Leonard Wood's educational technology systems not only make it easier for instructors to provide quality training more efficiently, they also help students accomplish their learning objectives. □

Fort Leonard Wood's wide-open spaces are well suited for training soldiers in the fine art of moving earth.

Engineer School

Story and Photos by SSG John Valceanu

Long used as a training area for Army engineers, Fort Leonard Wood became the official home of the Engineer Center and School in 1988.



A student in the Sapper Leader's Course finishes the 12-mile road march required to complete the training.

FORT Leonard Wood's relationship with Army engineers dates to 1940, the installation's first year of existence, when it was designated an engineer replacement training center. Enlisted engineers trained for World War II battlefields on Fort Leonard Wood, and they have continued training at the sprawling installation, on and off, for the past 60 years. It wasn't until 1988, however, that the Engineer Center and School moved to Leonard Wood from its longtime home at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Today, the Engineer School graduates approximately 8,000 enlisted soldiers a year from one-station unit training, consisting of both basic combat training and advanced individual training.

Additionally, 2,000 officers graduate each year from the Engineer School's basic and advanced officers courses, and 75 warrant officers receive engineer training. Furthermore, 400 soldiers attend the Sapper

Students in the Heavy-Equipment Operator's Course hone their skills by using their machines to pick up logs.

Leader's Course, an engineer version of Ranger School.

"This is a perfect place for us to conduct our course. We have woods, water, varied terrain, an airfield and access to aircraft," said CPT Todd Liebig, commander of the Sapper Leader's Course.

The course trains 40 soldiers per class in a team-building environment intended to enhance leadership skills, said Liebig.

Sapper students, who must hold at least the rank of specialist, also learn specialized engineer techniques; troop-leading procedures; conventional and expedient demolitions; mountaineering operations; aerial operations; airborne operations; foreign weapons; land navigation; and waterborne operations, Liebig said.

Fort Leonard Wood is a good place not only for the Sapper Leader's Course, but also for the other engineer courses taught on the installation.

"This is an ideal place to learn how to move earth," said SSG Earl Ellegood, a heavy-equipment instructor. "The terrain lends itself to a variety of training situations."

Ellegood said things are different from the way they were when he went through advanced individual training, back in 1984.

"It's a much more relaxed atmosphere now, and it's a lot more conducive to learning," Ellegood said. "Back then you always had drill sergeants breathing down your neck, and you were more worried about them than about what you had to learn."

The arrival of the military police and chemical schools has actually been a benefit to engineer training on Fort Leonard Wood as engineers have benefited from the new facilities that were built to accommodate the other branches, said CSM Jesus Gomez, commandant of Fort Leonard Wood's NCO academy.

"Students going through engineer BNCOC or ANCOC today have much better conditions than we had when I went through those courses," Gomez said. "A big part of that is the quality of our great new facilities." □

MP School

Story and Photos by SSG John Valceanu

The Fort Leonard Wood-based MP School trains soldiers, marines and personnel from allied nations. It also produces MP investigators and U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division agents.

MP students learn to defend themselves during riot situations by delivering debilitating blows with their batons.

WHEN the decision was made to move the U.S. Army Military Police School to Fort Leonard Wood, school officials and instructors took the opportunity to provide their input as to exactly what they wanted their training facility to be like. The result is a world-class training center where military policemen, investigators, correctional officers and other military law-enforcement personnel receive top-quality instruction.

The 14th MP Brigade, which trains all one-station unit training soldiers for the active and reserve components, trains more than 5,000 soldiers per year.

"This is the best facility I've ever seen. We were able to design facilities from the ground up," said Russell Strand, chief of the family advocacy law-enforcement training branch and a retired Criminal Investigation Division first sergeant. "Alabama was home for a lot of us, and we didn't really want to move. But this is the best thing that has happened to the MP school in a long time."

MSG Michael McPhee, operations

Teamwork is one of the essential skills future military police soldiers learn at the Fort Leonard Wood-based MP School.

sergeant for basic military police training, said that the facilities' excellence derives from the experience of those who made the plans.

"At Fort McClellan, the training came after the facilities were already built. Here, we knew exactly what we were going to need, and we asked for it," McPhee said. "For example, at McClellan we built our computerized weapons simulators inside the old racquetball courts at the gym. Here, we had special observation rooms built especially for that purpose."

Technology aids, such as the weapon-simulation devices, are implemented by the school not only to better train soldiers, but also to save funds, said SSG Michael Wayne, a military police weapons center instructor.

"We save millions of dollars each year by training soldiers on simulators," Wayne said. "Our systems replicate what it feels like to fire real rounds. When the soldiers go out on the range to qualify, they're ready."

Wayne said the facilities are constructed not only to take advantage of today's laser-disk and local area network technology, but are also built with an eye for the future.

"As networking technologies advance, we'll be ready. The facilities are set up to allow for different types of technologies to be installed as they become available," Wayne said.

But technology and facilities are only a part of what makes the military police school an outstanding facility. The experience and dedication of instructors goes a long way toward creating a corps of military law-enforcement professionals.

Instructors at the criminal investigation school rely on experience. As senior NCOs or warrant officers, most of them have been on the job for many years. The school trains soldiers, marines and personnel from allied nations. It produces military police investigators, as well as U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Division agents.

"Commanders want investigators who can find blood, find footprints, find evidence and get the bad guys," said CW3 Donald Hayden, chief instructor at the investigation school.

SGT Donald Rackley, an instructor in the Defense Protective Services Training Course, said the course's instructors bring a diversity of real-world experience to the job.

"Anything that could have happened to someone in protective services has happened to one of us," Rackley said. "Most instructors are civilians or senior NCOs, and they bring a lot of experience with them."

Rackley said he's very impressed with the facilities, and he's even more impressed with the welcome he received from the installation personnel.

"I remember getting a pamphlet that said 'Fort Leonard Wood welcomes MPs and Chemical soldiers with open arms.' That has certainly proved to be true," Rackley said. "Everyone here was very accommodating, and they've done their best to help us get up and running." □

Russell Strand, a retired MP first sergeant, teaches the art of investigation in one of the school's detailed recreations of a crime scene.

Proud Past

MG Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood's ample training facilities and wide-open ranges have made it an ideal basic training location for decades.

Story by SSG John Valceanu

Fort Leonard Wood was a busy training installation during the Vietnam War, providing basic combat, common and engineer specialist training for soldiers. In 1967 alone, 123,000 soldiers were trained on the installation.

World War II-era troops stand in formation on a Fort Leonard Wood parade ground.

IT was born during a time of change, as the United States scrambled to prepare itself for the possibility of war. Sixty years later, change is still the operant word at Fort Leonard Wood. Currently the U.S. Army's Maneuver Support Center is home to Army engineers, chemical soldiers and military policemen.

The installation can look back upon a proud history and forward to a bright future.

Fort Leonard Wood was created in the fall of 1940 as the 7th Corps Area Training Center, and the installation received its current name in January 1941. Various infantry divisions trained at Fort Leonard Wood during World War II, and the installation began its long association with Army engineers by serving as an engineer replacement center.

The installation closed following the war, but was reactivated when hostilities broke out in Korea. During the early 1950s Fort Leonard Wood was the home training station for the 6th Armored Division. When the unit was inactivated in 1956, the post was made a permanent installation and established as the U.S. Army Engineer Training Center.

The following years saw a massive building program at the installation. Modern barracks, family housing areas and facilities such as the post hospital and education center were built throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Fort Leonard Wood was a busy training installation during the Vietnam War, providing basic combat, common and engineer specialist training for soldiers. In 1967 alone, 123,000 soldiers were trained on the installation.

Following the Vietnam War the installation implemented several new

This image illustrates the fact that basic training soldiers in the 1970s enjoyed going through the gas chamber every bit as much as today's trainees do.

training programs and initiatives, such as basic training for female soldiers, one-station unit training and joint training with other services.

In 1985 the secretary of the Army approved the decision to relocate the U.S. Army Engineer School to Fort Leonard Wood from Fort Belvoir, Va. Construction of new facilities to house the school began the same year. Three years later, in 1988, the Engineer School completed the move and Fort Leonard Wood became the U.S. Army Engineer Center.

U.S. Army Forces Command assets stationed on the installation deployed to Southwest Asia in 1991 to support operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The installation also supported the mobilization and deployment of 20 reserve-component units and more than 1,500 Individual Ready Reserve soldiers.

By the end of the decade, the Army decided to close Fort McClellan and relocate the chemical and military police schools to Fort Leonard Wood. This meant a period of unprecedented growth for the installation, as new, state-of-the art facilities were erected and hundreds of new soldiers and their families were assimilated into the community.

Engineers have been training on Fort Leonard Wood's land and water since World War II, but the installation has been the official home of Army Engineers only since 1988.

Today Fort Leonard Wood and the Maneuver Support Center play a critical role for the Army — training today's engineer, chemical and military police soldiers to meet the challenges of tomorrow. □

[This story was based on information provided by Kim Combs, curator of the Fort Leonard Wood Engineer Museum.]